Weekly work updates from February 2004 through December 2004 on the restoration of the 1895 lumber schooner *C. A. Thayer* 

February 23 - 27, 2004

Just about all of the topside planking, the planking above the waterline, came off this week. One strake, or line of planking, has been left in place, #17, just above the waterline. This is intended to help hold the shape. Additional planking remains aft, to help hold the shape of the stern overhang. We begin to get a sense of the condition of the framing in the exposed areas. It is extremely variable, but our current guess is that something like a third of the frame timbers might be reused.

The framing replacement in the very bow, which was done in 1969, looks to be in very good shape overall. It was all heavily slathered in pentachlorophenol grease. This is a very effective, but very toxic wood preservative, which is no long approved for use. We have to be careful in handling this material. One thing we see here is that the framing timbers which were retained in the 1969 work, presumably on the assumption that they were sound enough to stay in place, are now severely deteriorated. As we will soon be making the same sort of judgments on framing timbers, there is a cautionary lesson in this.

The bulwark planking forward in the area of the raised focsle was removed, giving us a look at the condition of the stanchion timbers. An initial survey of these timbers indicates that perhaps three of eight can be reused.

We marked out some additional planking for removal, in places where the black-painted topside planking dips into the red painted bottom. In these cases we went only to the existing butt joints, pending decisions on how to treat the bulk of the bottom planking.

We also marked out three sections of bottom planking. The idea here was to test if the bottom planks could be removed intact. By the end of the week, it was reported that this was in fact not feasible. None of the marked out planks were removed.

On Friday, a task order to remove four strakes of thin ceiling was turned on, and this will begin next week. The idea is to take out the lower two strakes, next to the keelsons in order to get a first look at the framing. The frame timber pairs here consist of the floors, which run in a single piece across the centerline of the keel, and the lower futtocks, which butt on the centerline. We are hoping that these timbers will be in good shape, as they have been soaked in salt water throughout the life of the vessel, and are therefore not particularly subject to rot. We know that there is some deterioration of the frames well forward and aft, but with any luck the run of them through the mid-body will be reusable and need not be disturbed.

It begins to seem clear that if we are to retain the bottom planking, which seems to be just fine, we need to remove additional ceiling planking in order to assess the framing and replace timbers as needed. This approach would logically result in the eventual removal of the whole of the ceiling planking. This would be unfortunate in the sense that the ceiling planking is the surface visible from the inside of the hull, and replacement would be very obvious. We begin to feel, however, that this is the approach that will retain the most original fabric and best insure the continuity of the vessel.